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Carolina Earth Movers: MBE of the Year

Bruce Coward, president of Carolina Earth Movers Inc., is a self-described working man with a passion for business.

Although he had experienced a high level of success in the Air Force and working in the railroad industry, he was destined to follow in his father's footsteps and become an entrepreneur.

"I followed my heart. I always wanted to own a business," Coward said. "I didn't do it for the money. It was in my blood."

Business is a family affair at Carolina Earth Movers, where husband Bruce, wife Loyce, daughter LaKisha, and son Jerome run the day-to-day operations. "The family structure is the most important thing in our lives," Bruce Coward said. "No decisions were ever made without first having a family meeting."

[See CEM p.2]



Carolina Earth Movers is owned by the Coward family: Bruce, Loyce, LaKisha and Jerome. The company was recognized as BOWD's 2011 MBE of the Year.

Highway EDP Awards Eight Construction Management Certificates

Eight students earned a "Construction Management Certificate" from N.C. State University, and 16 students completed at least one course in the program, as part of BOWD's Highway Entrepreneurship Development Program. The series was led by NCSU professor Roberto Nunez, P.E.

Highway EDP is for business owners and supervisors managing highway projects. The training program is designed to equip firms with knowledge and relevant skills to increase potential success in the highway industry.

Class participants received training in Highway Plan Reading, Bidding & Estimating, Project Management, Financial Management, Bonding & Risk Management, Human Resources & Business Administration, Marketing and Contracts.

"Making History"

As a nation, we will celebrate Black History Month in February and Women's History Month in March, honoring individuals and organizations—past and present—who have sacrificed their own rights and freedom to forge a path for others yet to come.

It's not often we get to witness amazing moments in history materialize before our eyes. But that is exactly what has transpired over the past few weeks as the world watched Egyptian protestors move toward a new era of democracy for their nation. Here on the other side of the world, North Carolina residents have debated, marched, and protested during the year-long battle for economic parity, diversity, and equality in student school assignments within the Wake County Public School system.

Both politically and professionally speaking, no arena has been left unscathed. Statewide, M/WBE business owners have overcome great odds to persevere and survive in spite of tough economic times. Without question, their ability to endure and advance the cause of business and industry is historical. We salute all the organizations that are making a positive difference and paving the way for others.



*Mr. Shelton Russell
BOWD Director*



Carolina Earth Movers Inc. Makes Business a Family Affair

[cont'd from p. 1]



Carolina Earth Movers completes a demolition road project in eastern North Carolina. The Greenville-based company was founded in October 1993.

Based in Greenville, NC, the excavation and grading company also provides drainage, demolition, site development and site work services. In addition to the four family owners, the company also employs a team of equipment operators, truck drivers, and general contract laborers. The business was founded in 1993 and will celebrate its 18th anniversary in October. Throughout the years, CEM has completed numerous maintenance and highway projects for the city of Greenville, NCDOT, and other municipalities. Recent projects include a highway realignment project for NCDOT in Martin County; four streetscape projects for the city of Greenville; and a turning lane addition in Fayetteville, NC, where CEM functioned as the prime contractor. Coward said that working on the projects gave his company the necessary exposure and experience they needed to expand.

Coward credits his company's longevity and success with being focused, being persistent, having a plan, and surrounding the team with a positive support system of

business colleagues and experts. CEM has done significant work with NCDOT's Division 2 and also participated in BOWD's Project Legacy, Executive Management Training, and Entrepreneurial Development Program.

The CEM team makes it a priority to seek advice and support from other successful business owners and to network with like-minded individuals who are positive and encouraging. "You've got to believe in the people you have around you," Coward said. He emphasized the importance of delegation and making sure everybody fills a role that suits their abilities. "I do what I do, and they do what they do." He noted one of the most important business lessons learned over the years was to resist the urge to measure CEM's success by the accomplishments of other companies or competitors. Coward shared that the company's business philosophy is built on a commitment to customer service, demonstrating integrity, being proud of every job—big or small—and always doing things right. CEM was honored as the 2011 Minority Business Enterprise of the year during the BOWD Diamond Awards ceremony at the NCDOT annual transportation conference, Feb. 10.

There is a long-term plan in place for CEM to grow and impact the next generation of leaders. "This business is a legacy. It is a way of life and a way of expressing ourselves as the Coward family," he said. "The vision for Carolina Earth Movers extends for generations into the future – way past me."



CEM owners Bruce and Loyce Coward receive the BOWD Diamond Award for 2011 MBE of the Year.



Conference Highlights Trends and Opportunities

"It's always too soon to quit." Those words, among others, were shared by Dr. Calvin Mackie, motivational speaker, entrepreneur, and author of "A View From the Roof: Lessons for Life and Business." Dr. Mackie delivered the keynote address to approximately 300 attendees at the NCDOT annual transportation conference, on Feb. 10 at the McKimmon Center on the campus of N.C. State University in Raleigh.

This year's conference theme was Beyond the Limits: A New Era of Transportation. Dr. Mackie encouraged business owners to demonstrate a passion for their work, to "show up" and to deliver a quality product or service in order to effectively compete in the marketplace. He told the audience that, "'I don't know' won't cut it in the 21st century," and "If you're not at the table, then you're on the menu."

The underlying message presented throughout the conference was a focus on how to navigate transitions in transportation as a result of shrinking budgets, expanding populations, and tighter competition for limited resources. "It's in a state's best interest to grow and nurture small, minority and women-owned businesses," Mackie said. Mackie's presentation was followed by a small business panel that highlighted emerging opportunities in transportation and how to capitalize upon them. Featured panelists included: Sepi Asefnia, Sepi Engineering & Construction; Phil Freelon, The Freelon Group Inc.; Devon Henry, Team Henry Enterprises LLC; Arvin Maniktala, MA Engineering Consultants Inc.; and Andrea Moffat, Moffat Pipe Inc. The panel was moderated by Anita Brown-Graham of the N.C. Institute for Emerging Issues.

Panelists stressed the importance of building strategic alliances and long-term business relationships as a way to create sustainability and remain competitive in the current business climate. They also identified high-speed rail, airports, and federal government projects as stable contracts to pursue in the future.



2011 conference attendees visit exhibitor booths.

The BOWD Diamond Awards luncheon celebrated excellence and diversity in the transportation industry by recognizing seven companies and organizations for their commitment to excellence. Award recipients were: North Carolina Turnpike, NCDOT Diversity Award; APAC-Atlantic Inc., Thompson Arthur Division, Prime Contractor Award; MA Engineering Consultants Inc., Architectural & Engineering Firm Award; Carolina Earth Movers Inc., Minority Business Enterprise Award; Room for Improvement Inc., Historically Underutilized Business Award; Reynolds Fence & Guardrail Inc., Women Business Enterprise Award; and North Carolina Indian Economic Development Initiative, BOWD Partner Award.

The featured speaker for the luncheon was Nina Szlosberg-Landis of the NCDOT Board of Transportation. She described the growing population of North Carolina and the need to respond aggressively to the anticipated transportation demands. She said, "North Carolina is an exciting place to be right now, especially in the transportation business. It is a changing state. It is a different state from the old North Carolina. We need to anticipate and respond to the new trends."

Following the luncheon, conference attendees visited with more than 30 exhibitors and took part in one-on-one business matchmaking sessions.



Success Stories

Creating Successful Opportunities in Business



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